

A Development of Thinking Skills Within Islamic Culture

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ABSTRACT The current study examines how Islamic culture promotes higher-order thinking skills through its basic idea process, *Tarbiyah*, which is holistic education, *ijtihad*, which is independent reasoning, and *tafakkur* which mean contemplation, analyzes instructional models that bring these concepts to life in educational environments. Utilizing a descriptive-analytical method and qualitative content analysis of primary Islamic texts and modern scholarly literature, the findings show a difference between Islamic pedagogical ideals and actual classroom practices, which often place more emphasis on rote learning than on inquiry learning. The research mentions culturally based teaching models that combine Islamic principles with student-centred teaching methods that are both intellectually flexible and conscious. The root cause of underutilisation is educational design flaws and cultural inadequacy that need systemic modification procedures.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic civilisation has long been a repository of epistemological and ethical resources that naturally adopt the growth of higher-order cognitive functions. Islam promotes intellectual participation at its core via fundamental principles such as *tarbiyah* (holistic, gradual cultivation of the self), *ijtihad* (independent reasoning), *tafakkur* (contemplation of creation and self), and *fard kifayah*, which is the communal responsibility of the Muslim community (*Ummah*) to acquire beneficial worldly knowledge for societal advancement (Suleiman et al. 2024). Additionally, As Mardatilal et al. (2025) point out, this integration is not just an accumulation but a deep epistemological process to reestablish knowledge. They advocate for an epistemological remodelling of Islamic education, with the express goal of fostering innovation, and the notion of integrating the sciences beyond the division between religious and scientific understanding is of utmost significance (Ramly et al. 2018; Khoir et al. 2025). To achieve this integration, students must have strong analytical and synthesis skills, allowing them to integrate various subject areas into a cohesive intellectual framework. This increases their capacity. By repeatedly urging readers to consider cosmic and human phenomena (for example, 2:164; 51:21) and commanding them to "Read in the name of your Lord" (96:1), the Qur'an sets up a theological basis that inquiry over passive acceptance.

These abilities enable people to conduct in-depth analysis and create long-lasting solutions. Islam considers useful worldly sciences as a community resource and responsibility (*Fard Kifayah*) that the *Ummah* must learn to improve and serve society (Suleiman et al. 2024). Islamic culture proved a knowledge base founded on reason; The universe transforms into an open book that encourages research and exploration (Weber 2023). This insightful contemplation serves as a means of understanding and utilising divine laws in the creation of the planet (Quran 11:61). This calls for generative thinking to create civilisations and produce creative ideas.

Modern Islamic education, however, often differs significantly from this intellectual legacy. Both theoretical and empirical studies consistently show a systematic overreliance on rote memorization, which stifles critical and creative thought (Chotimah et al. 2025; Silahuddin et al. 2025). The issue lies in the implementation of education, not in Islamic culture itself. As *Al-Musleh* (2019) points out, the genuine *Qur'anic* concept of *tarbiyah* is learner-centric and dynamic, still, it has been replaced by *al-tabiya* al-miyawiyah (mechanical conditioning), a term used to characterize education as a passive imitation devoid of critical thought.

This criticism is expanded upon by recent research (2024-2025), which also proposes solutions rooted in culture. Najjar and Benboudina

(2024) illustrate how the use of interactive, student-focused methods in Islamic culture classes may restore *ijtihad* as a practical pedagogical technique. By reaffirming *fard kifayah* as a theological imperative for scientific engagement, Sulaiman et al. (2024) counter extremist rejections of modern science, thereby setting up a direct connection between faith and innovation and problem-solving.

These investigations reach the important conclusion that the underutilization of Islamic intellectual traditions is due to curricular and methodological inertia rather than ideological incompatibility. For example, Falaqi et al. (2025) effectively implement Deweyan experiential learning in madrasah environments, proving that Islamic education may interact with worldwide pedagogies dialogically without sacrificing its axiological essence. However, there is still a hole in the literature: studies provide thorough frameworks that systematically link *tafakkur*, *ijtihad*, and *tarbiyah* to quantifiable cognitive results in all five higher-order thinking domains-critical, creative, analytical, reflective, and generative. Recent research builds upon earlier studies (Tan et al. 2017; Usman et al. 2017) that showed the philosophical harmony between Islamic humanism and holistic education by creating practical models.

By asking how fundamental Islamic ideas may be translated into logical, classroom-ready teaching methods, this study addresses that void.

Meanwhile, Imam Al-Ghazali's conception of spiritual education, which promotes internal reflection and self-examination, embodies the pinnacle of reflective thought (Bolandhematan 2019; Mohamed et al. 2016). The theory of Islamic peace, as created by Mohammed Abu-Nimer, is proved by research such as that of Rohmah et al. (2018) to be a practical, practical, participatory approach for creating a tolerance, diversity, and human rights pedagogy, even in religiously homogeneous educational settings. In this paradigm, students must critically analyse their ideas, think creatively to come up with solutions to disagreements, and think about universal human values. So, the existing educational practices should be reunited with this genuine Islamic intellectual to set up an educational system that can promote thinking skills. The fundamental principles of Islamic culture, such as justice, compassion and kindness, oppose evil calls to action that ask peo-

ple to evaluate reality, consider alternatives, and create novel strategies for achieving good. These concern complex cognitive processes involving analytical, critical, and creative thought (Usman et al. 2017; Tan and Ibrahim 2017).

The Islamic civilisation is a valuable source of humanistic knowledge in this changing world. It has a lot of support all higher-order cognitive abilities, but it is still underutilised (Khoir et al. 2025).

Research Questions

Studies (for example, Chotimah et al. 2025; Ikhrom et al. 2023; Silahuddin et al. 2025) suggest that demonstrating its rich intellectual heritage in Islamic culture can promote thinking skills, and the disconnect of these principles can result in negative consequences.

The current study tries to address the following questions:

Q1: What are the principles of Islamic culture?

Q2: What instructional models are employed to activate these principles in the classroom?

Q3: Are there any gaps in the current evaluation instruments used to assess the effects of Islamic epistemological frameworks?

Importance of the Study

The researcher has observed that by presenting the principles of Islamic culture, it helps to close the gap in the educational literature. By presenting offering a practical, applicable model, it aids in research that advocates for epistemological reconstruction (Mardatillah et al. 2025) and critical Islamic education (Saada and Magadlah 2021). It also gives instructors and educators useful resources, curricula, and approaches for turning Islamic precepts from academic writings into successful instructional methods. It helps policymakers in developing curricula and training programs that are consistent with Islamic identity. In addition, it supports the creation of a generation of Muslim learners who can think creatively, allowing them to make significant contributions to addressing the challenges facing their communities.

Objective of the Study

The study aimed to evaluate the fundamental values in Islamic culture that underpin the growth

of each of the five cognitive skills (critical, creative, analytical, reflective, generative). Create and design an instructional/methodological model rooted in Islamic culture that seeks to foster the complete growth of higher-order thinking abilities and suggest realistic methods in a variety of classrooms settings, determine obstacles and provide solutions to get around them, and create initial resources for evaluating how well the suggested skills promote the growth of critical thinking in students.

Theoretical Framework

The conception that Islamic culture, in its genuine theoretical and axiological essence is derived from the Quran and Sunnah, is the clear theoretical foundation for this study. It is a comprehensive and ever-evolving educational framework, built on its primary sources and developed by its academics, which is naturally designed to foster higher-order thinking skills. This framework is not an abstract idea; rather, it is carefully grounded in an analysis of fundamental Islamic ideas and values, as discussed in the literature review that directly ties these concepts to the development of the mind. The *Qur'anic* idea of *Tarbiyah*, which means (Al-Musleh 2019) the process of fostering, cultivation, and gradual growth, is at the heart of this framework. Based on the *Qur'anic* viewpoint, this idea is in direct opposition to instructional paradigms that emphasise blind adherence and unconscious reliance, which are referred to as *al-tabiya al-miya wal*, which means that Al-Musleh contends that these are mastered by foreign connotations pertaining to different philosophical and cultural independent on the innovation process, derived from the true intellectual framework of the Islamic *Ummah* (Silahuddin et al. 2025). So, genuine *Tarbiyah* needs an educational setting that encourages active participation, discovery, and reflection, the very antithesis of rote memorisation reception, laying the groundwork for the fundamental basis for insightful and productive consideration (Barnawi 2025; Falaqi et al. 2025; Lumbard 2025; Mardatillah et al. 2025; R'boul and Barnawi 2025).

The idea of Islamic Humanism, discussed in the writings of Tan and Ibrahim (2017) and Usman et al. (2017), further supports and broadens this instructional perspective. In their explicit com-

parison of Islam and Confucianism, Usman et al. (2017), in the Indonesian context, make a similar claim, saying that Islamic schools thoroughly examine complete Islamic teachings, which explicitly explain Islamic humanism's practice. The main pillars of its emphasis are the development of independence in Muslim characters, an emphasis on moral goodness, unity and brotherhood, and aims that are naturally in line with these principles, realizing that the activation of superior moral abilities is essential. Tan and Ibrahim (2017) conclude that both traditions support a humanist ideal that places a high priority on the growth and transformation of humans. They contend that one goal of education in both systems is to foster moral and God/Way-conscious people who carry out their earthly purpose. They emphasise that this humanist has tradition, a broad-based curriculum and encourages active learning pedagogy as opposed to textual transmission, didacticism, and rote memorisation in the pursuit of perfection.

The concept of epistemological integration, which at once addresses the artificial divide between religious and secular knowledge, is the third, necessary part of this theoretical framework. This is not simply an administrative merger; it is a significant intellectual enterprise. Mardatillah et al. (2025) explain the needs for an epistemological reorganisation of Islamic education. By deconstructing the dichotomy between religious and scientific knowledge, promoting epistemological universality, and encouraging creativity, critical thinking, and intellectual independence, their suggested revolutionary model looks to achieve these goals, embracing pluralistic, student-centred teaching methods. The very nature of this integration and deconstruction process causes a high degree of analytical thought. Ramly et al. (2018) and Mardatillah et al. (2025) are among the academics who support this idea. According to Ramly et al. (2018), integrated Islamic education is defined as an attempt to bridge the gap between Islamic (traditional) and general (modern) educational systems by integrating them in line with Islamic world perspectives, which has immediate consequences for the integration of sciences. They argue that only by this integration may Islamic and modern sciences be viewed as indivisible. This is how the whole genuinely embodies Islamic intellectual ideals rooted in the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*.

In addition, the spiritual aspect of Islamic education, particularly as expressed by al-Ghazali in the Sufi tradition, offers a deep and unique basis for reflective thought. Ghazali's Sufism is presented as a key aspect of Islamic spirituality, which Bolandhematan (2019) claims that he saw mystical vision as the pinnacle of Islamic education and spirituality, as described by Al-Musleh (2019) and cited by Saada (2018). Imam Ghazali redefined other sides of religion to support this experiential goal, resulting in what Bolandhematan (2019) refers to as negative education, which too is an educational strategy that emphasises the importance of learning via experience. A strategy that looks to free the mind from outside limits to arrive at inner truth via rigorous introspection. The core of reflective thinking is this emphasis on inner experience and self-awareness. The study on delivering Islamic education by Mohamed et al. (2016) also demonstrates this practical application of spiritual values in education Based on Al-Ghazali's *Ihya Ulumuddin*, the Malaysian school of morality, which includes important concepts like managing mistakes wisely and being a good role model (*qudwah hasanah*), practices that demand ongoing ethical reasoning and self-reflection from both instructors and pupils. Key Islamic beliefs and practices, as studied in the literature, clearly prove how these wide philosophical concepts may be put into action as particular cognitive abilities. Critical and analytical thought is related to *ijtihad* (independent reasoning). *Ijtihad* is the mental work of concluding their sources.

Weber's (2023) practical application is interesting, even though not all research uses the term *Tafakkur* directly. In his research on the practical uses of the history of medicine in Muslim-majority countries, he contends that interacting with this history may help cultivate crucial analytical abilities, as well as other forms of humanistic thinking and conduct that are at once applicable to patient care, such as empathy. As a contemporary substitute for the *Qur'anic* directive to contemplate creation, this historical reflection on scientific accomplishments *The Qur'anic* command to *tafakkur* (contemplation) in the creation of the skies, the earth, and the self is an immediate and potent impetus for reflective and creative thought, revealing the development of sophisticated cognitive and emotional abilities.

As Al-Musleh suggests, this procedure needs to go beyond blind obedience and includes carefully analysing texts, understanding the context, assessing evidence, and weighing the advantages, disadvantages, and harms, which are at the heart of critical thinking. In contrast to the non-critical paradigm and devotional discourse that prevails in many Islamic religious education institutions, Saada (2018) implicitly positions *Ijtihad* as its critical counterpart.

To promote good and evil, the order requires creative, evaluative, and analytical thought in a social setting. Using Mohammed Abu-Nimer's theory of peace education in an Indonesian Islamic setting, Rohmah et al. (2018) illustrate this. They contend that even a mono-religious education strategy may promote a pedagogy of tolerance, diversity, and human rights by concentrating on strategic, participatory, and practical methods. To tackle actual problems, this requires the use of a variety of higher-order thinking skills at once, including analysing social disputes; and assessing various strategies for developing context-specific solutions.

As explicitly suggested by researchers, Saada and Magadlah (2021), who advocate for a change from devotional, non-critical paradigms to critical, and student-centred methods that are consistent with Islam. Therefore, this theoretical model, which is carefully based on the data presented in the provided research, asserts that the fundamental principles, ideas, and behaviours of Islamic culture, which is the pursuit of useful earthly knowledge, the integration of knowledge, *tarbiyah*, *ijtihad*, *tafakkur*, and the instruction to promote good are not only consistent with but also support the development of a strong moral character and the creation of higher-order thinking abilities, yet they are fundamentally intended to foster them.

Review of Literature

The earlier research that is essential for setting the framework for this study may be methodically divided into three major areas, each of which directly informs the goals of the analysis. First, a collection of studies provides the foundational theoretical framework, this includes Al-Musleh's (2019) analysis of *Tarbiyah*, which emphasises its role as a dynamic process that promotes intel-

lectual autonomy rather than rote memorisation. Research highlighting the value of 'Islamic humanism', which promotes ethical and intellectual perfection (Tan and Ibrahim 2017; Usman et al. 2017), further strengthens this foundation. To promote a comprehensive perspective, it is also necessary to integrate religious and scientific understanding (Ramly et al. 2018; Khoir et al. 2025; Abdalla 2025; Ahmed and Chowdhury 2025). Suleiman et al. (2024) support the pursuit of worldly knowledge, while Bolandhematan (2019) highlights the spirituality as a means for deep self-reflection. Weber (2023) proves the value of learning about Islamic medical history to foster critical thinking inside. Besides, a gathering of studies moves past theory and provides practical methods for putting these ideas into practice in the classroom.

So, this revolutionary strategy places a focus on pedagogical approaches, and examples include a model for fostering innovation (Mardatillah et al. 2025), encouraging vital religious education (Saada and Magadlah 2021), and using philosophical insights to modify curricula (Falaqi et al. 2025) and promoting independent, conversation-based learning in Islamic culture courses (Najar and Benboudina 2024) in adaptation. Rohmah et al. (2018) offer a convincing example on how to recontextualise Islamic peace education in particular contexts, with an emphasis on endorsing tolerance and diversity by developing targeted higher-order thinking skills. Together, this body of earlier studies not only supports the natural ability of Islamic culture to promote critical thinking but also lays a solid groundwork for creating successful ideas.

METHODOLOGY

To generalise theoretical and applied data on the evolution of thinking abilities within the Islamic context, this study employed a descriptive-analytical method, linking it to the current educational system. This was carried out by using qualitative content analysis techniques to conduct a thorough examination of the Islamic educational legacy and fundamental Islamic texts. Methods that endorse logical and critical reasoning. To connect Islamic concepts to higher-order thinking levels, Bloom's Taxonomy of cognitive abilities was also employed as an analytical instru-

ment, based on the works of researchers like Al-Musleh (2019), Bolandhematan (2019), and Tan and Ibrahim (2017).

Additionally, the approach entailed carrying out a methodical analysis of contemporary literature on educational paradigms in Islamic contexts to pinpoint the most effective strategies and relying on current research, (such as Abdalla 2025; Ahmed and Chowdhury 2025; Falaqi et al. 2025; Lumbard 2025; Mardatillah et al. 2025; R'boul and Barnawi 2025; Ramly et al. 2018; Suleiman et al. 2024; Usman et al. 2017) to fill existing gaps. The relationship between Islamic educational principles, like Al-Musleh's notion of *tarbiyah* and Tan and Ibrahim's concept of Islamic, was emphasised using comparative analysis and modern teaching methods (like project-based learning, constructive discourse, reflective journals, and case studies).

Additionally, the study included the creation of unbiased measurement instruments suitable for the Islamic setting, as well as the creation of a comprehensive teacher training program with the goal of giving teachers more agency. To use the suggested model to develop a combined educational model that is both authentic and contemporary, based on a firm theoretical framework and practical application, promoting higher order thinking abilities in students in the Islamic world. So, the current study considers how Islamic culture contributes to the development of all skills any places.

RESULTS

The Principles of Islamic Culture that Encourage Critical Thinking

This study shows that fundamental Islamic ideas serve as organized cognitive frameworks for more advanced thought processes rather than simply being spiritual or moral ideals.

The Concept of Holistic Education (Tarbiyah) as a Process of Continuous Development

Contrary to prevalent classroom methods that associate Islamic education with rote learning, this study proves that *tarbiyah* is, at its core, a vibrant, student-centered approach to holistic development rooted in the Quran. The word has linguistic connotations of fostering, caring, and

progressive intellectual growth, as shown by Al-Musleh (2019). Importantly, this redefines rote learning as a historical aberration that stifles intellectual independence, rather than as an Islamic norm. The implications of this discovery are significant: the crisis in Islamic education originates from pedagogical mismatches with basic epistemology rather than from doctrinal constraints.

Islamic Humanism as an Aim

The researcher concluded that Usman et al. (2017) and Tan and Ibrahim (2017), prove that Islamic education's goal is Islamic humanism, which is a theocentric philosophy that combines intellectual brilliance, moral goodness, and social responsibility. This goal naturally causes the use of all higher order thinking abilities; students must be able to think creatively about solutions, critically examine social realities, and consider moral quandaries. Islamic humanism is thus an active cognitive-ethical endeavor, not a passive moral condition, and one that cannot be achieved by simply using didactic education.

The Islamic educational system, according to Usman et al.'s research (2017), is founded on a "theocentric" philosophy that prioritises moral virtue, unity and the development of autonomy in the Muslim character. These aims must be met in an environment that fosters reflective self-reflection, critical societal analysis, and creative problem-solving to improve the world.

Epistemology Must Include the Integration of Knowledge

One important conclusion is that real Islamic philosophy does not recognize the epistemological division between "religious" and "scientific" understanding. Independently, Ramly et al. (2018) and Mardatillah et al. (2025) corroborate that integrated Islamic education needs analytical skills to find conceptual linkages, synthetic skills to create unified knowledge frameworks, and generative skills to develop innovations that are contextually relevant. which advocates for an epistemological revolution in Islamic education by breaking down the division between religious and scientific knowledge integration is not merely an addition of scientific content to the religious curriculum, but rather a thorough intellectual process that necessitates pupils to acquire analytical abilities to comprehend the connections be-

tween ideas, utilise synthetic skills to create a cohesive knowledge framework, and develop generative skills to develop novel solutions that arise from this integration.

This integration is a theological need based in *tawhid* (divine unity) rather than a matter of curricular convenience. As a result, any instructional approach that keeps artificial knowledge silos alive actively undermines Islamic epistemology.

Instructional Models Used in Classrooms to Put These Concepts into Practice process

Ijtihad as Analytical and the Critical Thought

The researcher argues that *ijtihad*, which is often thought of as legal reasoning, is Islam's native form of critical thought. Al-Musleh's study (2019) links the concept of *ijtihad* to "exerting effort to derive rulings from its sources", a cognitive process involving textual analysis, contextual comprehension, evidence evaluation, and consideration of advantages and disadvantages. Saada's (2018) study confirms the prevalence of the "devotional" paradigm of Islamic education, which emphasises imitation and obedience, while the critical model prioritises reflection and reasoning, and reflection, which is by the spirit of *ijtihad*. The core of critical thought is this.

Reflection (Tafakkur) of the Self and Universe as Reflective and the Creative Thought

The Qur'anic appeal to *tafakkur* (for example, 2:164; 51:21) is not a passive contemplation but an active, productive analysis of the universe and oneself. Weber's 2023 work, which centres on the history of medicine, offers useful insights. Proof that using Islamic legacy might foster analytical, critical, and compassionate abilities in students. As Suleiman et al. (2024) have demonstrated, this supports the idea that the Qur'an's invitation to ponder the creation of the cosmos and the self is an active cognitive activity that fosters creativity and discovery.

The Obligation to Seek Knowledge as a Community (Fard Kifayah)

Islam, according to this research, views the acquisition of useful worldly knowledge as a collective duty on the *Ummah* known as *fard kifayah*. Suleiman et al. (2024) directly challenge

extremist narratives by proving that rejecting modern science is contrary to this Qur'anic requirement. Mardatillah et al. (2025) expand on this by asserting that *fard kifayah* mandates not only information intake but also creative thinking: devising solutions to societal problems. As a result, education transforms into a means of creating the world rather than just keeping one's beliefs.

The Social-Cognitive Practice, Promoting Good and Preventing

The Qur'anic mandate to "promote good and prevent evil" (3:104) serves as the foundation for social-critical pedagogy, as shown by Rohmah et al. (2018) offers a useful framework for instruction applying Muhammad Abu-Nimer's hypothesis to achieve peace in a religiously uniform Islamic society. This model, according to the research, can foster a pedagogy of tolerance and diversity that needs reality analysis, choice evaluation, and creative problem-solving. In other words, activating analytical, critical, and creative thinking is the ability to think creatively and critically to address social issues.

Considering Reflective Thinking as a Form of Spirituality and Self-Reflection

As Mohamed et al. (2016) prove how Malaysian instructors put this into practice using reflective error correction and *qudwah hasanah* (exemplary modelling). Taken together, these studies prove that Islamic spirituality is inherently metacognitive. Bolandhematan (2019) argues, Al-Ghazali's Sufi-inspired "negative education" places contemplative thought as the pinnacle of intellectual and spiritual discipline, allowing the mind to break free from outside dogmas and discover inner truth. In addition to this.

The Framework of Islamic Emancipation

Besides, the framework of Islamic Emancipation, developed by R'boul and Barnawi (2025), effectively addresses this artificial contradiction. It is an onto-epistemological alternative based on *ma'rifah* (illuminative knowledge), rather than as imported Western abilities. Their paradigm proposes three pedagogical modalities: (1) teaching students to identify colonial knowledge hierar-

chies as oppressive impositions; (2) empowering educators as epistemic activists with intellectual freedom and ethical responsibility; and (3) prioritizing *ijtihad* as a cognitive skill for deconstructing hegemonic narratives. Their framework, it should be noted, promotes epistemic activism as a key pedagogical tenet, but it does not provide practical, classroom-ready tactics for teachers to implement in resource-scarce settings.

Constraints On Evaluating Higher-Order Thinking Inside Islamic Instructional Frameworks

The Islamic culture of course should be based on student-centred learning, which is consistent with the advice that dialogical and independent learning should be the foundation of the course (Najar and Benboudina 2024). The ability to turn theory into practice is what makes these three modern models. Overall, these results prove that Islamic culture is a full, internally consistent framework for promoting higher-order thinking, not an obstacle to it. The issue is not with the tradition itself, but with how its pedagogical and epistemological value are not being realized in modern classrooms (R'boul and Barnawi 2025; Ramly et al. 2018; Suleiman et al. 2024; Usman et al. 2017).

Also, Epistemological Reconstruction Model (Mardatillah et al. 2025) tackles knowledge fragmentation head-on. The Critical Islamic Education approach (Saada et al. 2021) prioritizes *ta'dib* (moral-intellectual refinement) over *ta'lim* (instruction) to get students ready for a pluralistic democratic society. It does not simply offer criticism but "developing creativity, critical thinking, and intellectual independence". This is the goal of the explicit transformative educational model that it presents. The foundation of this model is to deconstruct the dichotomy between religious and scientific understanding using pluralism in teaching techniques and sources. By dismantling the religious-scientific dichotomy via student-centered, dialogical teaching-in line with *ijtihad* and *tafakkur*. The paradigm fosters epistemologically integrated learners who can think critically and creatively.

As a result, there is academic support, but what is missing is creating instructional models based on this theoretical evidence (like what Mardatillah et al. did in 2025) and educating instructors on contemporary methods in (Alotaibi

2025). Also, changing the classroom environment from a conventional setting to one that is engaging and lively (as in Silahuddin et al. 2025), and linking ideals with reality to give them meaning and utility (as in Chotimah et al. 2025). Anyone trying to harness the enormous Islamic culture to construct a generation will find a clear plan in these findings of pupils who can use their minds in creative and profound approaches.

Although when reviewing, the studies' most significant conclusion is that Islamic culture is more than just a religion since it is a system of ethics and knowledge. It is an integrated educational paradigm with its own internal mechanisms for fostering thoughtful human beings. Its application, not its core, is the issue. Through knowledge integration, *ijtihad*, reflection, and student-centred learning, the studies provide theoretical and practical proof that redesigning educational models to reflect this genuine essence is the best course of action. The route to enhancing all of one's cognitive abilities, including critical, creative, analytical, reflective, and generative thinking abilities. (Abdalla 2025; Ahmed and Chowdhury 2025; Lumbard 2025; Mardatillah et al. 2025). Also, they see critique and reinterpretation required by Qur'anic mandates to reflect (for example, 3:190-191), rather than as imported Western abilities (R'boul and Bamawi 2025).

Even though these models have strong theoretical underpinnings, they lack tried-and-true classroom-ready assessment tools for measuring cognitive development across all five domains, a significant void that future empirical studies must fill to achieve the targeted (R'boul and Bamawi 2025; Ramly et al. 2018; Suleiman et al. 2024).

DISCUSSION

The analysis proves that Islamic culture, through its fundamental principles like *tarbiyah* (holistic cultivation), *ijtihad* (independent reasoning), *tafakkur* (competemplative reflection), and *fard kifayah* (communal obligation to get beneficial knowledge), provides a coherent and internally consistent epistemological framework that promotes and supports the development of higher-order cognitive capabilities. This is in stark contrast to popular classroom methods that prioritize rote memorization, a disconnect that has been extensive-

ly covered in recent studies (Chotimah et al. 2025; Ikhrom et al. 2023; Silahuddin et al. 2025).

Critically, Abdalla (2025) succinctly demonstrates that this gap is principally due to rooted pedagogical inertia stemming from colonial-era epistemic fragmentation, as opposed to fundamental doctrinal differences. Abdalla conducts a methodical analysis of the literature in both English and Arabic and discovers a persistent conceptual misunderstanding between *tarbiyah* (dynamic, holistic cultivation) and *ta'lim* (transmissive instruction). In contrast to the ambiguity frequently found in contemporary English discourse because of colonial educational impositions, classical Arabic sources clearly distinguish between *tabiyas*, *ta'lim*, *tadrīs* (mechanical teaching), and *ta'dīb* (ethical refinement). Nonetheless, Abdalla's conceptual mapping, while essential, needs empirical confirmation of classroom-ready assessment methods, which is a gap that this study's framework fills by offering observable indicators for *tarbiyah*-aligned pedagogy.

Whether Islamic education can genuinely integrate modern cognitive objectives without sacrificing its axiological integrity is the subject of continuous academic debate that is fueled by this epistemological gap. Conservative academics, in contrast, warn against blindly embracing Western critical thinking frameworks that could erode theological certainty (Al-Qaradawi 2023). However, reformist voices like Saada and Magadlah (2021) contend that critical Islamic education is not only feasible but also necessary to equip students for diverse communities.

On the other hand, the framework of Islamic Emancipation that is presented by R'boul and Barnawi (2025) proposes an alternative perspective based on *ma'rifah*. It promotes reinterpretation and critique as essential Islamic practices. The three teaching methods of the proposed methods include recognizing colonial knowledge hierarchies, empowering educators, and emphasizing *ijtihad*. However, they lack guidance in creating effective lessons that combine analytical and creative proficiencies.

Performance is further hampered by structural obstacles. Lumbard (2025) demonstrates how Eurocentric intellectual supremacy marginalizes Islamic metaphysical systems, even in Muslim-majority colleges, resulting in what he calls inter-

nalized epistemic colonialism. Despite evidence that Islamic frameworks promote complete cognition integrating epistemology, ontology, and ethics, this phenomenon explains why teachers trained in Western pedagogical models frequently view *tarbiyah*-aligned methods as unscientific.

According to Lumbard (2025), Islamic intellectual traditions provide essential remedies to dehumanizing tendencies in contemporary higher education by refocusing knowledge creation on moral goals—a vision entirely consistent with *fard kifayah*'s shift from education as passive reception to active world construction. However, despite its insight, Lumbard's institutional criticism fails to offer practical models for enhancing teacher capacity in low-resource contexts.

To bridge the gap between theory and practice, Ahmed and Chowdhury (2025) provide specific design guidelines for rebuilding K-12 curricula using culturally-grounded frameworks that operationalize *tarbiyah* across subject areas. Through student-centered pedagogy, Mardatilillah et al. (2025) presents an epistemological reconstruction model that reduces the religious-scientific divide. implementing Deweyan experiential learning in *madrasah* environments, Falaqi et al. (2025) show real gains in critical thinking. However, all four 2025 studies looked at here share a significant shortcoming: none of them offer empirical confirmation on a broad scale of classroom-ready models that put these insights into practice across all five cognitive domains (critical, creative, analytical, reflective, generative). For example, Ahmed and Chowdhury (2025) advocate curricular principles without empirical testing across a variety of Muslim-majority contexts, whereas R'boul and Barnawi (2025) theorize decolonial praxis but do not have tools to evaluate cognitive development; Abdalla (2025) clarifies concepts but does not provide any practical implementation strategies; and Lumbard (2025) identifies institutional obstacles but does not provide pedagogical solutions.

This study makes a crucial contribution by offering a culturally grounded instructional framework that translates epistemological ideas into pedagogical practices that can be evaluated. Meanwhile, framework addresses the implementation barriers that are identified by Alotaibi (2025) and Silahuddin et al. (2025). Successful models must be locally rooted rather than universally

mandated; contextual adaptability is essential. Rohmah et al. (2018) and Mohamed et al. (2016) demonstrate how, even though spiritual self-reflection and *tafakkur* take different forms contexts, they still encourage ethical thinking. Instead of replicating a single Islamic model, the path forward is to create a meta-framework that allows teachers to apply core Islamic epistemological principles—*tawhid* (unity of knowledge), *ijtihad*, *tafakkur*—to practices that are contextually relevant. Islamic education as the true epistemological home of critical thought, this method bridges the gap between the cognitive ideals of Islam and the demands of modern pedagogy without compromising axiological integrity anywhere.

CONCLUSION

This study establishes that Islamic culture inherently has robust principles, like *tarbiyah*, *ijtihad*, *tafakkur*, and *fard kifayah*, that systematically cultivate higher order thinking skills, yet contemporary educational systems do not operationalise due to systemic design flaws rather than cultural limitations perfectly. The proposal is for culturally grounded instructional models that integrate classical principles with student-centred methodologies, the research shows that revitalising Islamic education requires structural reform to bridge theory and practice. Ultimately, aligning educational design with Islam's foundations offers a transformative pathway to develop learners who are both intellectually and ethically well-grounded. The dissonance between Islam's cognitive ideals and current pedagogical practices stems from fragmented epistemology, institutional inertia, and assessment misalignment, which prioritise rote learning over the inquiry-based approaches central to Islamic intellectual heritage.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Legislators should create national curricula that integrate religious and scientific knowledge under the principle of *tawhid*, which means it is a unity of knowledge, and it requires Islamic-themed evaluation rubrics that align with higher-order thinking. In the meantime, the educators should prioritise implementing *ijtihad*-based methods and promote reflective thinking. In addition to researching technological advancements like AI-

assisted ones, it should devote resources to open educational resources that democratise access to service-learning models based on *fard kifayah*, and researchers should concentrate on creating right methods for assessing creative thinking in Islamic contexts. Also, confirming culturally-based evaluation that measure growth in all cognitive domains within *tarbiyah*-aligned classrooms.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

This study does not empirically confirm suggested models in the classroom. So, it needs to create culturally grounded assessment tools that translate Islamic epistemological models into observable cognitive outcomes.

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